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ANOTHER "FAUST"

Another "Faust"—just what does that fact signify? Is it piety toward Goethe that keeps the old story green in the German mind? Or is it the subject itself that carries the appeal?

Freiligrath's characterization, "Deutschland ist Hamlet!", is acknowledged to be more than a telling phrase; and it was Goethe's description of Hamlet which the revolutionary poet had in mind—the man of fine sensibilities, capable of the noblest and profoundest thinking, fatally reflective in a situation that called for action. "Sein bestes Tun ist eben Denken." Freiligrath would not have been provoked to write the poem a quarter of a century later. And yet—his criticism hits at one of the most irradicable traits of German nature. There is something of the "melancholy Dane" in most of the heroes of German literature, not a little of him in Faust. Certain it is that if the day is past when Germany can be called Hamlet, it is a perennial truth that every thinking German is a Faust: not the old magician, nor yet the superman, but the Faust which Goethe rendered typical of a people who tend to "Grübeleien." "Das Faustproblem ist ewig, weil jede Zeit es wieder gebärt," says the author of the latest Faust version.¹

This play is no "Symbolyzetti Allegoriowitsch Mystifizinski" Vischer parody, but a dignified and very able treatment of the subject by Ferdinand Avenarius which appeared in Munich early in 1919. Unlike most of the Faust-writers, Avenarius has passed by the beginning of the tradition, taking up the story just where the first part of Goethe's "Faust" leaves it. In other words, it is another *Faust*, *zweiter Teil*. As such it naturally follows the same general theme as Goethe's, that is, the salvation of one who has greatly sinned, and brings the career of Faust to the same sort of conclusion. The link with *Faust*, *erster Teil* is effected by means of a *Vorspiel*. The action is then developed in five *Handlungen*, the first and third of which are divided into four *Aufzüge* each. There is no list of characters

¹ Germany has produced more than two dozen dramatic or near-dramatic versions of Faust within the last hundred and fifty years.

—an omission of less importance than in Goethe, since the dramatis personæ are comparatively few. The dedication consists of two words: "Den Werdenden."²

The following detailed account of the action may be acceptable in view of the present inaccessibility of the book:

The gloom of the prison scene in the first part of Goethe's "Faust" is continued, somewhat intensified and perhaps unduly realistic, in the Vorspiel. Against the background of a stormy night gibbets appear, showed up from time to time by flashes of lightning. In the foreground a monk is leading the exhausted Faust toward a fire in the lee of a wall, the ruins of the burned house of the executioner. The spot—later mentioned as the Rabenstein—is uncanny: the situation is made more so by voices in the wind. One of them, evidently that of Gretchen, and symbolizing Faust's conscience, sings just as in the prison scene, but breaks off in ghastly fashion when she feels the executioner retain her head in his hands. Mephistopheles appears suddenly, and banters Faust for nosing about in the grass for "tote Sünderinnen" (Lebendig sind sie ja nett, aber nicht gerichtet). Whereas the Faust of earlier days was athirst for knowledge and wished to know the height and depth, the weal and woe of all life, he is now bowled over by the first uncomfortable experience:

Ei nein, das erste, was der Rede wert,
Zum sanften Büsser hat's den Herrn bekehrt:
Der Uebermensch schöpft aus dem Tatenstrudel
Die Götter-Weisheit vom gebrannten Pudel:
Du, Doktor Faustus, als ein Pilger trabst,
Ein Mönchlein neben dir, zum Papa Pabst!

Faust is but slightly roused by these taunts. He replies that reviling the church is common practise, but that the religious instinct survives in us none the less. He then wakes his fellow pilgrim and continues on his way. The monk, who does not like the looks of Mephistopheles holds up cross and rosary as he leaves with Faust. Mephistopheles cowers

² Avenarius' "Faust" is in reality a part of a cycle of five tragedies in which the poet proposes to develop the remarkable theme "Vom wachsenden Gott." The titles of these tragedies are *Baal*, der Gott des Hasses; *Jesus*, der Gott der Liebe; *Apostata*, die Reaction der Antike; *Faust*, die Gottheit im Menschen; *Mysterium*, das in die Zukunft weist.—*Editor*.

before the cross, acknowledging the power of Him whom it signifies. He gnashes his teeth, but then collecting himself, ends the scene with a truly Mephistophelean apostrophe to the moon:

Du in der Nacht gehenkter Schädel da,
Du hast's erreicht. Einst warst du auch solch Ding
Wie das hier: grün und bunt von frechem Leben.
Jetzt bist du Eis. Sie sind zu dumm für dich,
Sie girren zu dir und rammeln unter dir—
Verstünden sie die Zukunft, die du zeigst:
Sie hielten heulend sich die Augen zu.
Du *meinen* Sieg versicherndes Symbol,
Dir bet' ich dankend, du mein Augentrost!"

Certainly a strange mixture of old Teutonic Götterdämmerung and a more modern scientific cosmogony.

The first Handlung treats of Faust's Italian pilgrimage and its lesson for him. It is Carnival in Rome. In the first Aufzug Faust, by liberating some birds with which certain masqueraders were amusing themselves, brings upon himself their wrath and the attention of the prince, whose steps he has mounted. From his conversation with the prince we note that Faust has awaked from the delusion that the Popes or anyone could absolve him from a sin which he brought on himself. (Als könnte / Ein andrer lösen, was ich in mich band. And again: Ich fand ihn Vater, aber heilig nicht). His present state he describes by saying:

Nichts ist in mir als ein Nichts, nur dass
Dies Nichts nach Fülle schreit, ja schreit, und dass
Die Inbrunst dieses Schreis mir Leben ist. . .
Die Eisen meiner Schuld—sie fielen nicht,
Ich fühl' sie noch, und bis mein Atem lischt,
Werde ich sie fühlen—doch ich trage sie
Als Last nicht mehr, als Stützen trag ich sie.
Stark bin ich worden, und so fühl ich, dass
Der Schwächling nur in Reue sich zermürbt:
Wer einmal niederriss, soll dreifach baun.

The failure of the church to satisfy Faust is not surprising, for his pilgrimage to Rome is not a religious one but an aesthetic one. This is first made clear by his description of his journey. He knelt with the monk at every wayside shrine; but unlike the monk he saw not the cross before which he knelt, but noted

rather how the way to Italy brought him further and further into the sea of mountains, until finally one day he saw the southern sun warming the shepherd and his flocks on the Italian slope of the Alps. Even in a description so objective as this, Faust is still subjective; for when the prince, whose commonplace thought and expressions contrast markedly with the poetic imaginings of Faust, presses for details about the Alps and their inhabitants, Faust says, "davon sprach ich nicht, ich sprach von *mir*." Small wonder that the prince dubs him a "Grübelgeist" and distinguishes between the northern and southern temperaments as follows:

Ihr sprecht wie einer, der nicht reden kann
 Von irgendwas, als dem, was ihn bewegt.
 Wir sind hier anders, nordischer, wir sprechen
 Auch um der Schönheit willen, auch im Spiel.

As if to prove the truth of this remark, guests of the prince, among them a poet, a Humanist, an architect, a painter, and a scholar, come in and pour Faust's ears full of the ideas with which each is overflowing. The conversation is in the tone of Humanism, and the scene is brought to a close very appropriately by the breathless announcement of a belated guest to the effect that a sarcophagus at the Capitol has been opened and found to contain a perfectly preserved woman, the most beautiful in the world. The party breaks up to go view the marvel.

The second Aufzug, which is brief, introduces the Helena episode indicated at the close of the first. We are shown the room at the Capitol where the Swiss guards are having difficulty in restraining the curious crowd. At last they clear the room and lock it from without. Then in the darkness a red flame appears, out of which Mephistopheles steps. At his command Helena arises. For a moment she is rigid as a statue. She raises heavy hands to cover her eyes. Then she opens her eyes, stretches out her arms slowly—and laughs.

In the third Aufzug the motif is carried further. In the garden of the prince Mephistopheles, posing as an oriental physician, is explaining to the company how he has cured the sleeping beauty of all save a certain lack of memory. Faust and Helena pass across the scene; the former still in search of the answer to his problem, the latter the beautiful

but utterly soulless creature we might expect. This is her answer to Faust's questionings:

Schwerfälliger, der immer *wissen* will!
Was habt ihr denn vom Wissen? Suchen, Irren
Und dunkle Tat und Allerlei, wovon
Mir zu erzählen Ihr nicht lassen könnt.
Lieset Ihr's endlich! Meine Welt ist licht,
Weil das mir fehlt, was der da heilen soll.
Vergesst das Einstmals und genießt den Tag!

Helena does not rise above this philosophy in her conversation with any of her admirers. By night, when Faust comes to claim her, he learns that she has a rendezvous with the prince, and even with His Holiness. In disgust and rage Faust thrusts at her with his dagger, only to have the weapon shatter. Instead of a woman, a statue stands before him, and Mephistopheles' mocking laughter brings him to himself. Mephistopheles invokes the pact when Faust shows no desire to continue adventures of this sort further, but Faust refuses to be awed. He asserts his mastery over his presumptuous servant and bids him be gone from his presence. . . Thus ends Faust's quest for happiness in the sensuous and the beautiful. Significantly this end is marked also by his repudiation of Mephistopheles.

The fourth Aufzug completes Faust's Italian education. Leaving Rome with his monk who is like himself disgusted with it, he wanders into St. Peters at Vincoli. In the dim interior only the everlasting light is burning, but through the windows can be seen passing the light of the carnival revelers. The brother kneels and prays. Presently Michael Angelo accompanied by a servant bearing a light enters and works at his statue of Moses at the tomb of Julius. Faust engages him in conversation, propounding his ever present question of the summum bonum. This time he is fortunate in his man, who is not a "jesting Pilate" but a thinker and seeker like Faust. He ends his answer to Faust with the words:

Du sprichst von Brudergeist, nach dem du suchst?
Es sucht durch dich, das Unbekannte sucht,
Und sagt durch dich wohl, was du selbst nicht weisst,
Zu Unbekannten, wie der Funke springt,
Den Unbekannten, die es sucht.—Ich dien'.

To all other questioning the gray-haired sculptor only repeats the words, "Ich dien'." With this motto the act ends; with this new philosophy of life the pilgrim goes back to his native land.

We next find Faust—that is, at the beginning of the second *Handlung*—as an assistant to a professor in a German university. The scene is a dissecting room. Two conflicting actions transpire on the stage at the same time. In the rear the professor and Faust are busy with the students. Between teacher and pupil is shown to exist the ideal relationship: each is devoted to the other. The professor is without dogma, big, liberal, with a zeal for truth. At the front of the stage is a man of exactly the opposite type, a *Domherr*. In the intervals of quiet at the rear, he talks in low tones with the monk concerning the danger to the church from the heresy so prevalent just then. Luther is mentioned, but there is abroad other "Irrlehr, ja Gottlosigkeit im Doktormantel." It soon develops that Mephistopheles in the disguise of a student has urged the canon to have the monk watch Faust and the professor for heresy. It is a bitter task for the monk, for he is fond of Faust but he accepts it in loyalty to the church. As servants are about to carry out the dissected corpse, the canon openly defies the professor by demanding the body in the name of the Church. The students line up on the side of their master, but the latter waves aside the conflict, saying that they are done with the body. The spectator realizes, of course, that the crisis is only postponed. After every one has left the stage but Faust and the professor, the chill of the canon's hostility still lingers. Faust especially sees things in their darkest colors. When the professor speaks of spring (it is in the last day of the winter semester), Faust thinks of frost, the late frost that kills the hopeful green of spring.³ The feeling of each is justified very swiftly by what follows. A traveling student enters, bringing the professor a sealed book from an anonymous scholar who has just died. This mysterious volume gives the professor proof of the earth's rotation. The professor, carried away with this information, gives no heed to his wife who rushes in to tell him that the servants of the Inquisition are after

³ One is reminded—perhaps the author himself had it in mind—of Cardinal Wolsey's soliloquy on the fate of man.

him. He breaks out into a beautiful eulogy of the sun, just setting, which gives to the canon, who enters at this moment, the necessary evidence against him. With dignity and satisfied with his life's fulfillment, the professor goes to meet his end.

With the third *Handlung* the action is speeded up. Faust, like Goethe's *Götz*, is drawn from his personal affairs and his brooding out into the maelstrom that followed the Reformation—the peasant uprising.

The first *Aufzug* represents a preacher, not unlike Vansen in "*Egmont*," stirring up the peasants against their masters. The group disperses at the approach of some troopers, who ride up with a peasant in tow—literally in tow, for a cord around the peasant's neck is fastened at the other end to the tail of one of the horses. These savory gentlemen, overbearing, cruel, and beastly, tarry long enough before the tavern to prove the truth of much that the preacher has said. As they pass on, the group, reassembling, mark them for revenge.

So much for the ominous background. Faust becomes involved in the movement when in the second *Aufzug*, he objects to a sermon of the canon directed against the professor. Faust mounts the pulpit himself, gathers around him the students present, and instructs them to go forth to start the insurrection.

The third *Aufzug*, laid at a country school house, reminds us more particularly of "*Götz*." A knight, captain of the revolt, holds a brief council with some of the peasant leaders, who are bloodthirsty and—winethirsty, being incidentally already somewhat inebriated. We hear much of the exploits of one Deix, not present. Against the wish of Faust, the schoolmaster, and the knight, Deix is chosen to lead the peasants against a strong fortress called the *Grafenstein*.

The scene is then changed to this castle after it has been stormed by Deix and his men. The peasants are seen leading off prisoners, looting, and otherwise making merry. Some few protest to Deix against the cruelty and indecency of the proceedings. This leader, by his devilish sarcasm—for he is none other than Mephistopheles—stirs up the rest rather than pacifies those protesting. One woman is particularly vicious, and urges the burning of a priest whom someone has dragged out of hiding. Faust appears on the scene in time to

make an earnest but unavailing effort to stop such excesses. He turns for help to the leader, and recognizes him for the first time. Mephistopheles meets his interference with scorn. Only when Faust commands him on the basis of the pact to prevent the thing does Mephistopheles agree to save the priest. It is, of course, the moment the devil has been waiting for. And Faust himself, though in deep disgust at Mephistopheles and all these proceedings, accepts the pact again because he needs supernatural aid. He complains that all his efforts fail because he can not get at the real source of authority:

Wohin ich komme, komme ich
Zu spät, und wo ich greife, greif ich leer.
Und grade darum brauch ich dich.

Believing that the kaiser will do the right thing, if only the truth can be presented to him, he demands to see the kaiser. This Mephistopheles is ready to do, remarking, however, that to break through the barrier of sycophants and officials is the most difficult sort of task.

The fourth Handlung, true to tradition, retards the action. Into it Avenarius has packed most of the irony of his play, even as Goethe made courts and courtiers ridiculous in the first act of "Götz." Against the background of burning castles and a wronged and revengeful peasantry we have depicted the cause of it all: the pompous folly of a selfish court and a bigoted church. The personification of the situation is the young kaiser, described by Mephistopheles in the remark:

Seine Majestät
Sind in dem Alter, da das Gockelchen
Das Krähn erlernt, doch sind sie trotzdem noch
Weich wie ein federloser Spatz im Nest,
Drum packt man sie in Zeremonienröcke.

Very naturally, each courtier is intriguing for his particular interest. Among them the chancellor is supreme. He aims at power, and is absolutely unscrupulous in attaining it.

The act takes the form of an audience by the emperor. The treasurer pleads for money, the honest captain for soldiers to put down the revolt, the prelate for more wealth and power to make the church safe. The weakling kaiser makes a per-

functory answer to these demands. The chancellor, whose ambition is to create an empire on which the sun never sets causes his majesty to give audience to an adventurer who has been with the Spaniards in America. The tale of European greed and Indian naïveté which the stranger reluctantly tells is, if possible, a little more charged with irony than the rest of the act.

Faust penetrates this circle by the aid of Mephistopheles who has made himself jester to the emperor. He introduces Faust as a fellow fool; not without a certain humor for Faust's pleading for the exploited masses sounds like the veriest nonsense in that company. It is received as such.

After the audience is over, the chancellor detains Faust to ascertain what manner of man he is. Perhaps he attains this end. Of greater interest to the spectators is the chancellor's revelation of himself; for to Faust, whom he expects to put out of the way, he bares his soul. It is not exactly "eine schöne Seele."

The act ends in an odd way. The chancellor calls the guard to take Faust, but the latter is so little concerned that he turns his eyes toward the invisible and talks with the Demon of Darkness. Faust, in his attempts to serve his fellow-man, has met so much evil that he is tempted to believe in this moment that in evil lies the ultimate power. He wants this power. Paradoxically enough he wants to wield it against the evil he has seen among men. For it he is willing to sacrifice his life eternal—his most priceless possession. But when Satan demands that he worship him, Faust can not bring himself to that. He turns to the guard and is led away.

If the fourth *Handlung* is filled with the irony of human existence, the fifth is equally rich in those emoluments which come to the brave soldier of life who keeps the faith—the rewards of the spirit. Instead of irony, Avenarius brings in the full force of his idealism in this last act.

The setting itself is in keeping: in the place of the palace, school, or tavern of the other acts we have the open country—a mountainside in the twilight. We catch sight of a hermit's cave, before which the everlasting light shows us an altar adorned with a skull and a cross.

In these significant surroundings the knight, the schoolmaster, and the survivors of the student company are making their last bivouac. None of them is in doubt as to their fate on the morrow, and yet, conscious of having done their best, they are reconciled and cheerful. One of the students sings a song to Comrade Death. The knight has opportunity to show his self-control when he sees his castle, only a few miles distant, go up in flames. The frailness of human handiwork in comparison with the eternal scheme of things is further set forth in words of the schoolmaster which might be taken as a very good expression of Avenarius' *Weltanschauung*:

Das Bild, das wir vom deutschen Reich erseh'n,
In uns erseh'n, wir hielten's für des Reichs
Lebendgen Kindskeim in der Zukunft Schoss
Und meinten: die Geburtshilf' will's von uns.
Es war kein Kindskeim, Freund, es war ein Bild,
Erträumt von uns im Wirschlaf dieser Zeit.

Ritter:

Wird's auch mit uns vergehn?

Schulmeister:

Steht eine Weid' am Fluss und spiegelt sich.
Die Well, die hebt ihr Bild, die Weide schaut's,
Die Welle geht, das Bild zerbricht, die neue
Hebt wieder eines auf und bricht's auf neu.
Der Baum trinkt von der Welle, und er bleibt,
Verändert sich, und wächst, und andre Bilder
Nun schon vom grössern Baume hebt's ihm zu
Dort aus dem Fliessenden. Keins nimmt er an,
Aus aller Bilder Wellen aber trinkt er.
Die Wellen heben, spiegeln und vergehn,
Der Baum wird gross.

Faust, returning from his mission to the emperor (he had told the chancellor that no prison could hold him), brings a discordant note into this scene. He is despondent and disgusted:

ich bringe Hohn,
Verdienten, dass ich nicht beim Leisten blieb,
Magister schustern, Pfaffen ölen half,
Und schliesslich gar die Wahrheit nützen wollte,
Statt schön zu predigen, dass sie allzeit herrscht.

Apparently the philosophical pilgrim was never further from saying to the passing moment, "Stay, thou art so fair!" And yet that moment is imminent.

As if to sever the last bond to the earthly, comes the monk, mortally wounded, with the news that the professor has been burned at the stake. Faust thus loses his only friend. But the message which he sends to Faust—identical with Galileo's famous *sotte voce*, "it moves nevertheless"—is proof of the triumph of the mind over the body, and fortifies Faust for his final hour. When his companions in arms have lain down to sleep and Faust is left alone, that hour is upon him.

As at the end of Goethe's "Faust," Gretchen appears for a moment. Her significance for all Faust's career is made clear by her words:

Aber all deine ganze Krankheit lang
 Bin ich um dich geschlichen,
 Und nie gewichen—
 Bei deinem Erbarmen
 Mit den Armen,
 Durch ihr Gesicht
 Sah ich dich an—
 Heinrich, erkanntest du mich denn nicht?

She hints also that he has won his fight. But the rôle she plays is not that of Goethe's Gretchen, who intercedes for Faust and, as it were, opens the pearly gates for him. Avenarius objected strongly to Goethe's closing lines, "Das Ewig-weibliche zieht uns hinan": he found Faust's entrance into something like an erotic paradise and altogether unworthy end for such a career. And so his Gretchen dies away in an echo before Faust reaches his supreme victory.

Metphistopheles, who realizes now that Faust's soul is out of reach of any harm he can do it, comes to get what satisfaction he can out of the temporal part of his companion. He is still bound by the pact, however, and so when Faust demands to see the future of mankind, he conjures up the picture for him.

Presumably Mephistopheles meant to give just so much of this picture as he saw fit: the evolution of the human animal from the lower forms and its heritage of brute passions. But before the scene is over, he has a suspicion that God has taken the thing out of his hands; and so it is. A human face, gigantic, insanely distorted, develops out of the kaleidoscopic visions that have appeared. This is the image of humanity as Mephistopheles would have him see it:

Das ist der heiligen Menschheit Haupt—
 Nur leider der Vernunft beraubt:
 Die Viecherseelen,
 Die sein Hirn besessen,
 Sie haben's mit der Zeit
 Ihm ausgefressen,
 Das aber heisst:
 Zum feinsten präpariert—
 Hohl erst ward's reif,
 Dass es die Welt regiert!

Faust, disregarding Mephistopheles, speaks with the face which loses its distorted appearance gradually as it succeeds in expressing itself. It tells Faust that it is honor and greed, suckled by the animal in man, fed by the blood of those sacrificing themselves, guided by love and rage—in short, it is a thing half devilish, half divine. By this time Mephistopheles sees the trend of this development and seeks to drive the vision back into the limbo from which it came. But Faust cries in exaltation:

Dämon! *Es bleibt! Es bleibt!*
 Nicht du, nicht du bist's, der die Erde treibt!
 Das Sehnen ist's, und wenn's den Leib zerreibt,
 Das Schaffen wird, und ewig formend hebt,
 Gott ist's, der lebt! (zum Gesicht)
 Du bist die Menschheit, die im Suchen irrt!

The face has now lost all its grossness. The features are those of a noble type, resembling Goethe in his best years. Just before it fades from view, it supplements Faust's definition with, "Die Gottheit bin ich, die im Menschen *wird*." This is for Faust his greatest moment. Raising his hands to heaven in ecstasy he recognizes that it is God whom he has sought, and God within him who bade him seek.

But what of Mephistopheles? This realization of the divine event to which all humanity moves, has left him out of account and put him in a fury. He has no power to destroy the soul, but he can kill the body. When Faust says to him in contempt, "Du da, du *bist* nicht mehr!", he springs upon him, strikes his heart, and then disappears in the ground. Faust sinks, but triumphantly—cheerfully accepting his fate, even as his fellow soldiers asleep on the ground around him. The serenity of the scene during the last moments is most

fitting. The stars have come out, and now nothing is to be seen but the expanse of the heavens in all their beauty. A profound quiet reigns. After a long pause the curtain slowly descends.

Such, then, is the new "Faust." As I said at the outset, it is not a parody like Vischer's play. But Avenarius himself confesses his agreement with Vischer's criticism of the second half of Goethe's "Faust." Vischer, it will be remembered, revolted against the indefinite and unsatisfactory nature of the second part. He resented particularly the snobbishness of those scholars who pretended to find profundity where there was none. It was against the "hochnasige Kritiker," these "Goethepfaffen" more than against Goethe himself that he put forth his satirical skit. On the other hand he considered the first part of "Faust" a magnificent, inimitable fragment which challenged completion. The problem appealed strongly to his philosophical nature, and he actually did sketch the plan of a second part himself. That he did not execute it is due to a conviction which he finally reached, "dass niemand es Goethe gleich kann, der ja im Alter sich selbst es nicht gleich tun konnte."

Avenarius follows Vischer even up to this discouraging conclusion but not in the acceptance of this conclusion as a deterrent. Taking the promise that the Faust theme is capable of being continued ad infinitum, he maintains that a poet should not let his impulse to embody it anew be suppressed by the fear of appearing ridiculous as a rival of Goethe. It appears, however, that Avenarius carried the idea of a new "Faust" about with him for forty years before he summoned courage to enter the ranks with it.⁴ He confesses that the play might never have been written had it not been for the war, which unquestionably revised many previously accepted values and stirred poetic depths that had been long dormant.

Without knowing in the least how he had conceived his "Faust" before, we can make only a vague estimate of the effect of the war on its composition. It must be that a well defined plan simply ripened under the influence of those fateful years, for in no ordinary sense can this be called a war-

⁴ See his article in *Kunstwart*, April 1919. I am indebted to this article for all my information concerning the genesis of his "Faust."

play; certainly not a *Tendenzstück*. War there is in the play. The rapacity of the stronger nation (the story of the explorer), the unholy ambition of the chancellor, the arbitrariness and the injustice of the government, the ravages of brute passions set free, may all be echoes of the holocaust of 1914-1918. But they are hardly more than echoes. His picture of a people in arms is decidedly more poetic than political. Similarly, the idealistic conclusion—that might does not make right, that the good cause does not perish with its defenders—is the sort of justice which is more usually called poetic than historic.

The newness of this Faust version does not lie then in an adoption of the garb of the hour. Avenarius, whose poetic ability has sometimes been doubted, is universally admitted to be possessed of a sound artistic sense; such an instinct kept him from spoiling his theme with anything cheap and transitory. He is aiming, like Goethe, at nothing short of the universal; in this case, the universal problem of good and evil. It is on his conception of this problem that he bases his apology for presenting the world with another "Faust."

Those who have read Vischer's farce (or even Baumbach's Märchen, "Die Teufel auf der Himmelswiese"), will recall that Dr. Faust is not enjoying all the delights which the hereafter is supposed to hold for those who have been saved from the wrath of God. The poor wretch has to teach school; and tristissime dictu, he must expound a poet's version of his earthly pilgrimage that is, Goethe's Faust, II Teil. The reason for this probationary state is the fact that his salvation as depicted by Goethe has been too easy. Avenarius also takes this view as his starting point, naturally for a more serious treatment. Perhaps the most fundamental difference between Goethe and Avenarius consists in just this. To Avenarius' mind, the manner of Faust's salvation is the real Faust theme, it is the answer to the whole problem of good and evil. He wants his Faust saved not by a pardoning word of the deity, but by the victory of the divine in his breast over the evil there. For Faust there must be no moment of complacency—no rest, in fact, for it is a fight till death. No assurance of any sort that he will win is given him. His final victory is predicted by his growth, but he is not allowed to realize it until the last moment. It is an evolution, the meaning of which does not dawn on

him until Mephistopheles shows him the evolutionary development of the race. The lesson of service he learns from Michael Angelo; that of devotion and sacrifice, from the professor, the knight, the students. He acquires the passion of doing things for others, which reaches its highest point when he offers his hope of eternal life in exchange for the power to help his fellow man. Unquestionably as high an ethical pinnacle as any Faust could attain.

In comparison with Goethe—and one must be continually testing other Faust versions by Goethe's—this high ethical ideal is stressed more, is more in evidence. One would not be apt to accuse Goethe of having subordinated the aesthetic to the ethical; it is just possible that such a verdict may be brought against Avenarius. In analyzing the Faust legend Avenarius makes two statements which throw light on his conception of the theme: "Und schliesslich kommt das zustande, woran wir so gewöhnt sind, dass wir uns erst bewusst machen müssen, wie höchst erstaunlich es ist: ein Sünder, der sich dem Teufel verschrieben hat, wird dem deutschen Dichten zur teuersten Verkörperung des Idealismus." And: Das tiefste Treibende in der Faustsage war, sehe ich recht, das seh nende und suchende und meist ganz unbewusste, ganz versteckte religiöse Gefühl." The first sentence might be applied to almost any of the Faust poets from Lessing on; the second one, with slight modification, represents Avenarius' conception of the Faust saga.

Perhaps Avenarius is naturally religious. Or it may be that the crisis of the war turned his thought more into those channels. Or again, he may have considered the religious element essential to the play in view of its presence in the tradition. Whatever the cause, religion, both formal and real, permeates the play. From the prolog to the last curtain, there is scarcely a scene without some visible manifestation of the church. Among the characters there is a preacher, a monk, a canon, a pope, a prelate, a hermit, and a schoolmaster who has once been a priest. The rosary, the cross, the everlasting light, the chapel, the cell, the wayside shrine are scattered throughout the action. A sermon is preached, extreme unction is given, and a heretic is burned.

If this were all, one might attribute it to local color necessary to a Reformation drama. But there is more than religious form here. Faust's education, as can be seen from the outline given above, is a religious one, culminating in the recognition of the doctrine of Christian atonement and salvation. Mephistopheles is made to acknowledge the power and significance, not of the God of Goethe's prolog, but of Christ and his cross. When the monk exorcises him he says to himself:

Mich beisst's wie Flohbiss, das verdammte Kreuz!
 Ich pfeif, ich spuck drauf, ich zerknack's, das Luder,
 Wo ich den Dreck nur an den Kleidern seh . . .
 (auflachend)
 Was, alter Herr, Dich selbst belügst du auch?
 Dass lass den Pfaffen! Ich veracht' es nicht:
 Ich *hass* das Kreuz: der, dem es dient, hat *Macht*,
 Und ihm beliebt's, mich seiner Macht zu ducken.

He even shows a knowledge of Christ's teachings:

Zwar hast du recht, am Kreuz du, *das* stirbt nicht,
 Was Herbstens welkt. Ja, wär' das Saatkorn tot!

But note particularly what spells defeat for him in the end:

Dich glaubte ich endlich reif, da sagt ich's *ihm*,
 Dem Herrn der Nacht . . . (wieder im Spottton) dem Chef,
 (wieder düster) und wie zu Jenem
 Im Judenland einst auf den Berg er trat,
 Kam Satan hin zu *dem* (wieder in leichtem Spottton):
 und machte Offert
 (wieder düster) Und alles, was er bot, und alles, was
 Die Hölle nur zu bieten hat, und alles,
 Wofür *wir* alles gaben—Alles—*Alles* . . .
 Für einen *Teil* wovon schon *ich* dereinst . . . (zwingt
 den Gedanken weg. Knirschend):
 Ihm war's noch nicht das Knie zu beugen wert.
 Für andre seine Seligkeit! Und bietet
 Sie uns: "da nehmt—ich geb's für andre!" Grausen
 Mach mir das Wort: für andre. Was durchglüht
 Von ihm, für uns geladen ist's mit Blitz. . .

There is one advantage certainly in having a Leitmotif so patent as it is here: the unity of action becomes a simple matter. All the action in this "Faust" is indisputably germane. It is more: it is beautifully proportioned. As far as critics of Goethe are agreed on anything, they seem to be agreed on

the lack of these qualities in the second part of his "Faust." It is natural that Avenarius should have made especial effort to avoid an error so often charged to his predecessor. In doing so, he kept his play well within the bounds of practical stagecraft. There is that in the Faust theme which tends to drag the poet loose from his moorings in the workaday world, with the result that a Faust drama too often turns out to be a book drama. Such can not be said of the one in question. It is altogether actable; and in a land of subsidized theatres where the artistic has a chance, it should find its niche among the classics.

It should—unless a certain brusqueness and colloquial flavor of its language shunt it, despite its philosophy, into the class of naturalistic productions. Avenarius, who found the second part of Goethe's "Faust" most valuable because it is a rich collection of the confessions of the poet grown wise with age, must also have recognized the unabated ability of the octogenarian to write beautifully. Why didn't he imitate the style even though the plot was not to his liking? The answer is doubtless evident enough: the style is the one thing he could not imitate. This we might forgive him had he substituted something of his own which would not allow us to miss so much the smoothness and beauty of Goethe's verse. It is on just this that I would make my one really unfavorable criticism of Avenarius' play: for a theme so lofty he uses a medium altogether too inadequate. There is an absolute dearth of fine lines in the play. He had neither the serenity of Goethe, nor the rich, sensuous beauty of Grillparzer, nor the terse aptness of Hebbel. He has written his "Faust" in an age when poetry in the drama is all but dead.

And yet we are glad that he did write it. All honor to his courage in breaking the spell that has too long hung over the Faust theme. His play is proof enough that it was worth while to do so.

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